

# Michigan Merit Curriculum

## Guidelines



## Personal Curriculum

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# Quick Guide to Using a Personal Curriculum

## Welcome

This guide was developed to assist educators, students and parents to understand when and how to use a personal curriculum modification of the Michigan Merit Curriculum (MMC). The use of a personal curriculum (PC) modification is allowed by state statute for only three reasons:

- A student wishes to modify the mathematics requirement
- A student wishes to go beyond the academic credit requirements by adding more math, science, English language arts or languages other than English credits
- A student with a disability needs to modify the credit requirements based on his or her disability

## Definition of Personal Curriculum

**The personal curriculum is a documented process that modifies certain requirements of the Michigan Merit Curriculum.**

The personal curriculum (PC), requested by the parent, legal guardian, or emancipated student, allows the board of a school district or public school academy to award a high school diploma providing the student completes the PC including as many of the content expectations of the MMC as practicable.<sup>1</sup> See page 8 for the text of the state statute.

The legislative intent of the PC is to increase the rigor and relevance of the educational experience. In this context, “practicable” is an inclusive term meaning as much of the subject area content expectations as possible for the individual student. The implication for a student with disabilities using the PC option is that the school “shall incorporate” as much of the content expectations in areas that are being modified as is reasonably doable in the context of increased rigor.

A PC allows a student to earn additional credit in specific subject areas or for students challenged with Algebra II, the personal curriculum allows a student to adjust his or her remaining mathematics credits. The PC may also be an option for students with disabilities requiring specific modifications of the Michigan Merit Curriculum to ensure progress with the career pathway and post-secondary goals.

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<sup>1</sup> MCL 380.1278 a

The personal curriculum is not a stand alone document that drives a student's high school experience, but must be developed and coordinated with any other plans a student has in effect such as the Educational Development Plan (EDP) and the Individualized Educational Program (IEP). At a minimum this means that modifications to the student's academic expectations made through the personal curriculum option should not erect barriers to progress along their career pathway or the achievement of post-secondary goals. The IEP is to support the student's progress in the general curriculum.

## **Eligibility for Use of Personal Curriculum Modification**

A personal curriculum may be appropriate for a student who has demonstrated one or more of the following:

- Ability in a specific skill area consistent with a career pathway and/or a post-secondary vision or plan that requires additional or specialized instruction when there are limitations in time available for elective opportunities
- Ability to succeed in accelerated or advanced math, science, English language arts or languages other than English
- Lack of progress on the MMC despite documented interventions, supports, and accommodations for a student with a disability
- Desire to complete math requirements, including the first half credit of Algebra II, through CTE or other programs
- Eligibility for special education services and a documented need to make modifications determined to be necessary because of the student's disability.

The PC is not a process for tracking large groups of students into an alternative curriculum.

## **When to Request a Personal Curriculum Modification**

There are no time lines stated in the state statute aside from the mathematics and social studies requirements described below in the Allowable Modifications section.

## Allowable Mathematics Modifications

A student can use the PC to reduce the credit requirements for mathematics to 3.5 providing the student takes mathematics in the senior year. A student must complete a minimum of Algebra I, Geometry and the first semester of Algebra II (2.5 credits) or the equivalent of these credit requirements in an integrated math course to qualify for a PC modification. A PC can modify the Algebra II credit requirements if the student has successfully completed at least 2 of the required mathematics credits (Algebra I and Geometry or its equivalent) and wants to take Algebra II over two years.

Allowable Mathematics Modifications					
	1 credit	1 credit	1 credit	1 credit	Total Credits
MMC	Required Mathematics HSCE			Options determined by the district	4
Modified MMC	Required Mathematics HSCE			Options determined by the district	3 1/2
Modified MMC	Required Mathematics HSCE .5 in CTE			Options determined by the district	3 1/2
Modified MMC	Required Mathematics HSCE	Algebra II		Algebra II	4

## Allowable Modifications to go Beyond Academic Requirements

### Social Studies

- Substituting credit requirements for one social studies credit for students who have successfully completed two required social studies credits (which must include Civics), to acquire additional credits in English language arts, mathematics, science or languages other than English

### Health and Physical Education

- Substituting credit requirements for one health and physical education credit to acquire additional credits in English language arts, mathematics, science or languages other than English

### Visual, Performing, and Applied Arts

- Substituting credit requirements for one visual, performing, and applied arts credit to acquire additional credits in English language arts, mathematics, science or languages other than English

## **Allowable Modifications for a Student with a Disability**

### **When to Request a Personal Curriculum Modification for a Student with Disabilities**

The parent of a student with a disability may request a modification to the MMC that is not *otherwise* allowable if the student has a disability as defined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 2004 (IDEA 2004). This allows for additional credit substitution or content modification if the changes are based on the student's disability.

IDEA 2004 specifies that an IEP for a student with a disability shall identify appropriate courses of study as well as supports, accommodations, and modifications necessary to allow the pupil to progress in the requirements of the MMC or in the Personal Curriculum.

NCLB and IDEA 2004 hold State and Public Agencies accountable for the performance of students with disabilities within a structure of state standards. While it is allowable to account for growth and performance for some of these students on alternative achievement standards, it is not appropriate to create a different path to graduation.

Section 300.102(a)(3), regarding exceptions to FAPE, clarifies that a regular high school diploma does not include an alternative degree that is not fully aligned with the State's academic standards, such as a certificate or a general educational development credential (GED).

Neither the Michigan Department Education, local or intermediate school districts have the authority to override the accountability framework that NCLB and IDEA created.

### **Key Points for the PC for students with Disabilities**

IDEA 2004 guarantees a free appropriate public education (FAPE) but does not establish an entitlement to a diploma. Every effort must be made to provide students with disabilities full access to the MMC before making modifications. Modifications to state standards may effect a student's opportunity to achieve a diploma. For a student eligible for special education services, the personal curriculum modifications must:

- Incorporate as much of the subject area content expectation as practicable for the student
- Be consistent with both the Educational Development Plan and the Individualized Education Program (IEP)
- Modify components of the content expectations within each credit requirement

Additionally, the personal curriculum modifications should:

- Reasonably enable the achievement of post-secondary goals
- Facilitate progress along the student's career pathway and the achievement of post-secondary goals
- Enhance the relevance of the student's educational experience
- Provide full access to statewide assessments
- Provide a gateway to employment and productive adult living
- Maintain the integrity of the diploma

The local board of education establishes criteria for content mastery, allowable modifications, and what constitutes credit for specific courses.

Practicable content is the mix of existing MMC content expectations and modifications to those expectations driven by student need, that when achieved, will assure the individual student progresses towards his or her identified post-secondary goal/s and career pathway.

The starting point for development of personal curriculum (practicable content) begins with:

- Identification of the student's career pathway
- Identification of the student's post-secondary goal/s
- Assessment and documentation of the student's current level of performance
- Identification of the requirements for achieving career and post-secondary goals
- Identification of the critical educational experiences the student needs to achieve post-secondary goals
- Modifications to facilitate the student's achievement of post-secondary goals

The law also states that the Superintendent of Public Instruction shall monitor a school district if there is reason to believe that the school district is allowing modifications inconsistent with the requirements.

## **Modifications Not Allowed**

There are **no** modifications to credit requirements allowed in the following areas except for students with disabilities:

- English Language Arts
- Science
- Languages Other Than English
- Civics/Government
- Online Learning Experience

## Personal Curriculum Modification Process

The PC process demands the involvement of many people and should be used only after other options, like the use of electives, have been exhausted. The PC process must include the parent/legal guardian, student, counselor or principal designee, school psychologist (if available for a student with a disability), school district superintendent or public school academy executive and school board.

- **Initiation:** Initiated by the parent/legal guardian or emancipated student, or by the student with permission of parent/legal guardian
- **Development Team:** Developed by student, parent/legal guardian, counselor or designee and (if available) school psychologist if a special education student
- **Agreement:** Written agreement between the local school district or public school academy superintendent or chief executive, parent/legal guardian, and student
- **Credits and Content:** Must meet as much of MMC as practicable. Includes measurable goals to be met in high school and a method of evaluation on whether goals are met
- **Use of EDP:** Aligned with student's educational development plan (EDP).
- **Use of IEP:** Special education student's IEP shall identify courses (which may be contained in the PC), supports, accommodations and modifications
- **Quarterly Meetings to Monitor:** Parent/legal guardian meets quarterly with each teacher of modified curriculum area to monitor student's progress
- **Revision:** Revisions to PC may be made using the same process as the original PC

## Related Processes

- **Awarding Diploma:** A board of local school district or public school academy may award a diploma to students completing a PC
- **Reporting:** MDE is required to monitor the use of PC to ensure compliance and consistent application of the PC requirements. Local school districts and public school academies will provide annual information on the number of personal curriculum modifications in use

## Options to Meet or Modify the MMC Requirements

A student may wish to specialize in a curriculum area like music or technical education. The personal curriculum modification is not necessarily the way to accomplish this. For example, a personal curriculum is not needed if:



- A student wants to pursue career and technical education courses, humanities courses, industrial education or applied arts
- A student wants to take accelerated courses through dual enrollment, advanced placement or International Baccalaureate
- A student wants to enroll in alternative education programs
- A student wants to change the Educational Development Plan

Students participating in these programs are expected to meet the MMC credit requirements and can do so through the use of electives, testing out, CTE programs and other processes which are already in use in the high school. The school district or public school academy may deny a personal curriculum modification if it does not comply with state statute, if other options for meeting the student's educational needs have not been documented, if it is not in the best interest of the student, or if the members of the PC development team cannot reach agreement.

### **Potential adverse effects of using a personal curriculum**

Parents and students need to understand the possible consequences for modifications of the MMC or high school content expectations. Personal curriculum modifications for students with disabilities that reduce the number of content expectations mastered by the student, may affect the student's readiness to:

- Pass the Michigan Merit Exam
- Be admitted to college
- Be eligible for college scholarships
- Enter a trade school
- Secure a job in the career of their choice
- Be eligible for NCAA athletic programs

Modifications that erect barriers to student success may impact the districts ability to:

- Achieve Adequate Yearly Progress
- Meet improvement targets informed by the Continuous Improvement and Monitoring System, the State Performance Plan and the Annual Performance Report

## Appendix A

### Section 380.1278b of the Revised School Code

(5) The parent or legal guardian of a pupil may request a personal curriculum for the pupil that modifies certain of the Michigan merit standard requirements under subsection (1) or section 1278a(1)(a). If all of the requirements under this subsection for a personal curriculum are met, then the board of a school district or board of directors of a public school academy may award a high school diploma to a pupil who successfully completes his or her personal curriculum even if it does not meet the requirements of the Michigan merit standard required under subsection (1) and section 1278a(1)(a). All of the following apply to a personal curriculum:

(a) The personal curriculum shall be developed by a group that includes at least the pupil, at least 1 of the pupil's parents or the pupil's legal guardian, and the pupil's high school counselor or another designee qualified to act in a counseling role under section 1233 or 1233a selected by the high school principal. In addition, for a pupil who receives special education services, a school psychologist should also be included in this group.

(b) The personal curriculum shall incorporate as much of the subject area content expectations of the Michigan merit standard required under subsection (1) and section 1278a(1)(a) as is practicable for the pupil; shall establish measurable goals that the pupil must achieve while enrolled in high school and shall provide a method to evaluate whether the pupil achieved these goals; and shall be aligned with the pupil's educational development plan developed under subsection (11).

(c) Before it takes effect, the personal curriculum must be agreed to by the pupil's parent or legal guardian and by the superintendent of the school district or chief executive of the public school academy or his or her designee.

(d) The pupil's parent or legal guardian shall be in communication with each of the pupil's teachers at least once each calendar quarter to monitor the pupil's progress toward the goals contained in the pupil's personal curriculum.

(e) Revisions may be made in the personal curriculum if the revisions are developed and agreed to in the same manner as the original personal curriculum.

(f) The English language arts credit requirements of subsection (1)(a) and the science credit requirements of subsection (1)(b) are not subject to modification as part of a personal curriculum under this subsection.

(g) Except as otherwise provided in this subdivision, the mathematics credit requirements of section 1278a(1)(a)(i) may be modified as part of a personal curriculum only after the pupil has successfully completed at least 2-1/2 credits of the mathematics credits required under that section and only if the pupil successfully completes at least 3-1/2 total credits of the mathematics credits required under that section before completing high school. The requirement under that section that a pupil must successfully complete at least 1

mathematics course during his or her final year of high school enrollment is not subject to modification as part of a personal curriculum under this subsection. The Algebra II credit required under that section may be modified as part of a personal curriculum under this subsection only if the pupil has successfully completed at least 2 credits of the mathematics credits required under section 1278a(1)(a)(i) and meets 1 or more of the following:

(i) Has successfully completed the same content as 1 semester of Algebra II, as determined by the department.

(ii) Elects to complete the same content as Algebra II over 2 years, with a credit awarded for each of those 2 years, and successfully completes that content.

(iii) Enrolls in a formal career and technical education program or curriculum and in that program or curriculum successfully completes the same content as 1 semester of Algebra II, as determined by the department.

(h) The social science credit requirements of section 1278a(1)(a)(ii) may be modified as part of a personal curriculum only if all of the following are met:

(i) The pupil has successfully completed 2 credits of the social science credits required under section 1278a(1), including the Civics course described in section 1166(2).

(ii) The modification requires the pupil to complete 1 additional credit in English language arts, mathematics, or science or 1 additional credit in a language other than English. This additional credit must be in addition to the number of those credits otherwise required under subsection (1) and section 1278a(1) or under section 1278a(2).

(i) The health and physical education credit requirement under section 1278a(1)(a)(iii) may be modified as part of a personal curriculum only if the modification requires the pupil to complete 1 additional credit in English language arts, mathematics, or science or 1 additional credit in a language other than English. This additional credit must be in addition to the number of those credits otherwise required under subsection (1) and section 1278a(1) or under section 1278a(2).

(j) The visual arts, performing arts, or applied arts credit requirement under section 1278a(1)(a)(iv) may be modified as part of a personal curriculum only if the modification requires the pupil to complete 1 additional credit in English language arts, mathematics, or science or 1 additional credit in a language other than English. This additional credit must be in addition to the number of those credits otherwise required under subsection (1) and section 1278a(1) or under section 1278a(2).

(k) If the parent or legal guardian of a pupil requests as part of the pupil's personal curriculum a modification of the Michigan merit standard requirements that would not otherwise be allowed under this section and demonstrates that the modification is necessary because the pupil is a child with a disability, the school district or public school academy may allow that additional modification to the extent necessary because of the pupil's disability if the group under subdivision (a) determines that the modification is consistent with both the

pupil's Educational Development Plan under subsection (11) and the pupil's Individualized Education Program. If the Superintendent of Public Instruction has reason to believe that a school district or a public school academy is allowing modifications inconsistent with the requirements of this subdivision, the Superintendent of Public Instruction shall monitor the school district or public school academy to ensure that the school district's or public school academy's policies, procedures, and practices are in compliance with the requirements for additional modifications under this subdivision. As used in this subdivision, "child with a disability" means that term as defined in 20 USC 1401.

(l) If a pupil is at least age 18 or is an emancipated minor, the pupil may act on his or her own behalf under this subsection.

(m) This subsection does not apply to a pupil enrolled in a high school that is designated as a specialty school under section 1278a(5) and that is exempt under that section from the English language arts requirement under subsection (1)(a) and the social science credit requirement under section 1278a(1)(a)(ii).

(6) If a pupil receives special education services, the pupil's Individualized Education Program, in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Title VI of Public Law 91-230, shall identify the appropriate course or courses of study and identify the supports, accommodations, and modifications necessary to allow the pupil to progress in the curricular requirements of this section and section 1278a, or in a personal curriculum as provided under subsection (5), and meet the requirements for a high school diploma.